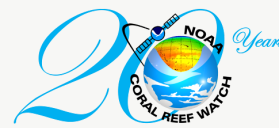




Maldives - North (Haa Alif to Baa / Lhaviyani)



Regional summary of 6 dive sites. Figures are averages across the sites that report them (n = sites with a value); each site's own page has its individual values. Part of the [Maldives](#) overview.



Coral Health Index: TBD



Photo: Anderson Mayfield/Coral Reef Diagnostics — [Maldives](#) - Four Seasons Landaa Giraavaru

COUNTRY

Maldives

SITES

6

each linked below

HARD CORAL COVER
(REGIONAL MEAN)

30% ± 9.5% (std. dev.)

n = 5 of 6 sites. range 17–45%

WATER TEMP. DURING
SURVEYS (REGIONAL MEAN)

—

n = 0 of 6 sites

CORAL HEALTH INDEX
(REGIONAL MEAN)

not yet scored

n = 0 of 6 sites

MOST RECENT WATER
TEMPERATURE RECORD

29.7°C

16 Sep 2026 · [Maldives](#)

MOST RECENT HEAT
STRESS RECORD



0.0°C-weeks

16 Sep 2026 · below alert level

MEAN ANNUAL MAX DEGREE
HEATING WEEKS (DHW), LAST
5 YEARS

2.2°C-weeks

2021–2025 · Maldives

HIGHEST ANNUAL HEAT
STRESS

10.9°C-weeks

in 2016 · Maldives

SEVERE HEAT-STRESS YEARS

3

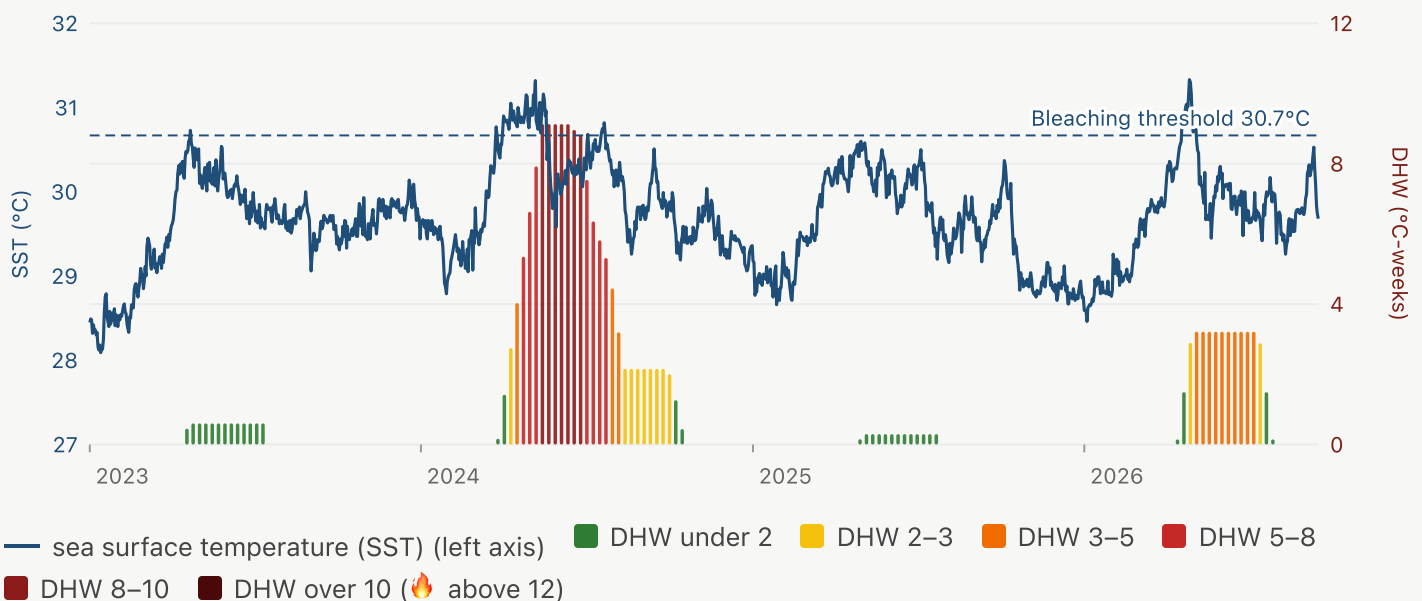
1985–2025 · 2 in the last 10 years

Heat-stress figures: [NOAA Coral Reef Watch](#) — [Maldives](#) 5-km virtual station. Each pill links its source record and carries the values behind it.

REGIONAL SUMMARY

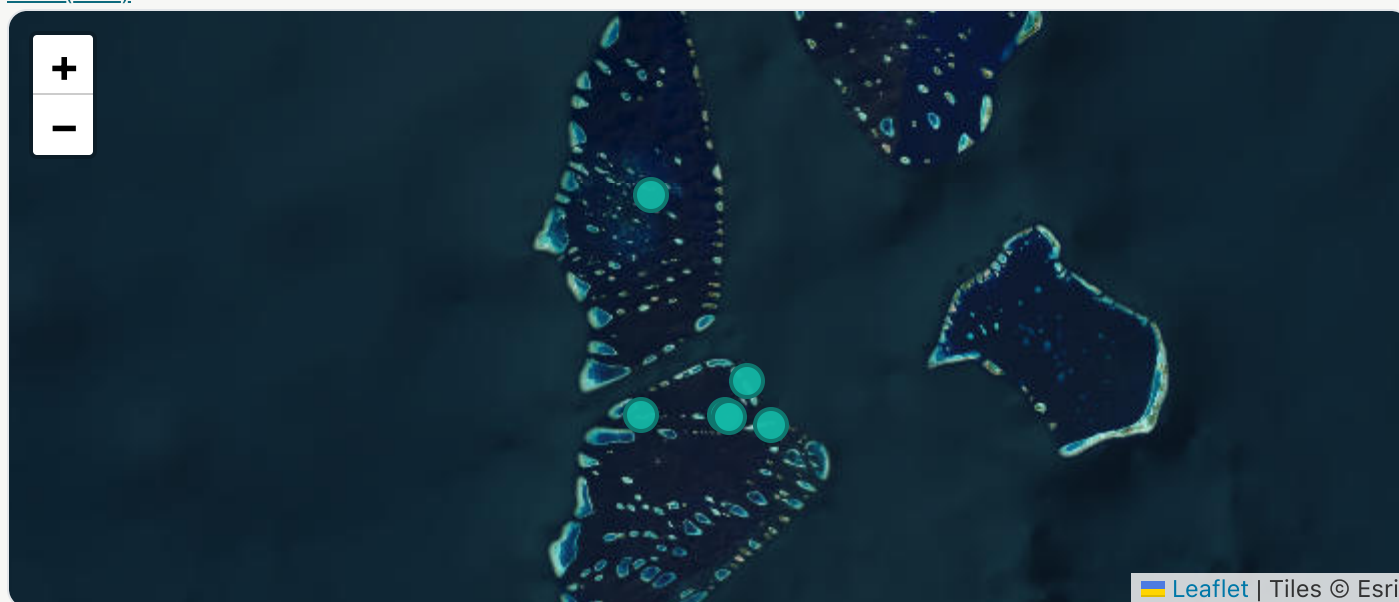
Baa Atoll's staghorn carpets, tiered [table corals](#), and plate-coral slopes were photographed on January 2016 research dives, about three months before El Niño [bleaching](#) struck. Early stress was already visible, including a [crown-of-thorns starfish](#), while four other northern atolls have no site photographs yet.

Heat stress



Daily SST (line) and weekly maximum Degree Heating Weeks (bars), Jan 2023–Sep 2026, [NOAA Coral Reef Watch](#) 5-km Maldives virtual station. Dashed line: bleaching threshold (maximum monthly mean $29.7^{\circ}\text{C} + 1^{\circ}\text{C}$). $\text{DHW} \geq 4$: bleaching likely; ≥ 8 : severe bleaching and mortality likely. A bar is drawn only where DHW exceeds zero, so a stretch with no bar is accumulated heat stress of zero, not missing data — the SST line runs the full period.

Long-term record: 3 years since 1985 reached 8 or more $^{\circ}\text{C}$ -weeks at [NOAA's](#) Maldives station. [Download the annual DHW data \(CSV\)](#).



6 sites in this region — click a marker to open that site.

Read this summary in:

English

ދިވެހި

Regional setting

The Maldives are a chain of 22 atolls running some 800 km from north to south, the central and largest section of the Chagos–Laccadive Ridge, which traces the path of the Réunion hotspot ([Spalding et al. 2001](#)). The atolls rise steeply from the ridge in two parallel rows, and the northern end of the chain holds the world's biggest surface-level atolls: Thiladhunmathi and Miladhunmadulu, two names for a single atoll structure, together cover some 3,680 km². The atlas map of this sector also shows Ihavandhipolhu, Makunudu, North, and South Malosmadulu, and Fadhipolhu atolls, along with several early protected dive sites, among them Anemone City, Dhigali Haa, Kuredhu Express, and Fushivaru Thila, gazetted in 1995 or 1999. Atoll rims are broad reef flats cut by deep channels, and the 15–55 m lagoons hold patch reefs, knolls, and faros, ring-shaped reefs like miniature atolls that are rare outside the Maldives. At least 209 scleractinian species are recorded nationally, with diversity highest in the south. Coral cover on atoll edges, faros, and lagoon knolls had exceeded 60% to at least 20 m, but in 1998 some areas lost up to 90% of their hermatypic corals. [Spalding et al. \(2001\)](#) estimate about 8,920 km² of reef for the Maldives as a whole, and [Souter et al. \(2021\)](#) give 6,372 km² for the Maldives ecoregion from a newer map.

[Wilkinson \(2006\)](#), summarizing the 2004 status report, describes encouraging recovery in the Maldives after 1998, but also a slide in the priority given to monitoring, with tourist resorts managing many marine protected areas and filling gaps left by limited national funding. [Souter et al. \(2021\)](#) show Maldivian coral cover recovering until about 2015 and falling after the [2016 bleaching](#), which across South Asia killed over 42% of living hard coral. In 1998 the most susceptible genera had been [Acropora](#) and [Echinopora](#); mortality in 2016 was lower, partly because less coral remained and partly because the survivors included more bleaching-resistant species. Localized bleaching from 2017 to 2019 prolonged the decline. [Souter et al. \(2021\)](#) also flag sea-level rise as a serious danger for Maldivian island communities.

Overview

The northern Maldives unit combines four atoll-level pins that carry no photographs of their own (Haa Alif, Noonu, Raa, and Lhaviyani) with five photographed pins in Baa Atoll. All of the Baa photographs come from research dives in January 2016, when coral colonies were tagged with numbered plates and measured against rulers along transect lines. The pins describe these frames as a portrait of the reefs about three months before the 2016 El Niño bleached the vast majority of corals on Baa's study reefs.

The Baa reefs vary in character. Off Landaa Giraavaru, the bottom is an unbroken carpet of staghorn thickets and meter-wide [table corals](#) stacked in tiers. Kashidhoo Faru is a rolling slope covered in whorled plate-coral rosettes and staghorn thickets with lilac-blue tips.

Gaagandufaruhuraa is a shallow reef terrace off a small island, where a rubble-strewn flat drops steeply into blue water, with cauliflower [pocilloporids](#), staghorn, boulder corals, and [leather corals](#). The Anantara Kihavah pin combines a house reef, whose bommies are carpeted in [sea anemones](#) around a [coral nursery](#), with a sheer outer wall faced in yellow soft corals. The Baa Atoll (Hanifaru) pin holds three further monitoring sites whose exact reefs could not be geocoded. They range from a high-relief reef front with table [Acropora](#), staghorn, and cauliflower [Pocillopora](#) to a gentle field of [Porites](#) domes and leather corals.

Photo-derived cover indices ranged from 17.0% at Kihavah to 44.5% at Gaagandufaruhuraa across the five photographed pins. These are computer-vision estimates, not diver surveys, and at Landaa Giraavaru the two methods disagree by about 15 percentage points. Signs of stress were already visible in January 2016. A [crown-of-thorns starfish](#) sat below table corals with fresh white feeding scars on the Kihavah wall, and scattered bone-white branch tips appeared among the tagged colonies at the last Baa monitoring site. A [nurse shark](#) resting under a ledge and a bannerfish school were recorded on the Baa reef front.

Highlights

- Four Seasons Landaa Giraavaru: an unbroken staghorn and table-coral carpet, photographed in January 2016.



photo: Maldives - Four Seasons Landaa Giraavaru

- Gaagandufaruhuraa had the highest photo-derived cover index in the unit, 44.5%.



photo:

Maldives - Gaagandufaruhuraa

- All photographed sites are January 2016 monitoring baselines with tagged, ruler-measured colonies.
- Kihavah's outer wall is faced in yellow soft corals; a crown-of-thorns starfish was photographed below scarred table corals.
- Haa Alif, Noonu, Raa, and Lhaviyani carry no site photographs yet.

Notable observations

- [Maldives - Anantara Kihavah house reef & Golden Wall](#): crown-of-thorns starfish (COTS): a crown-of-thorns starfish out on the rubble below a couple of table corals bearing its stark white feeding scars

(January 2016).

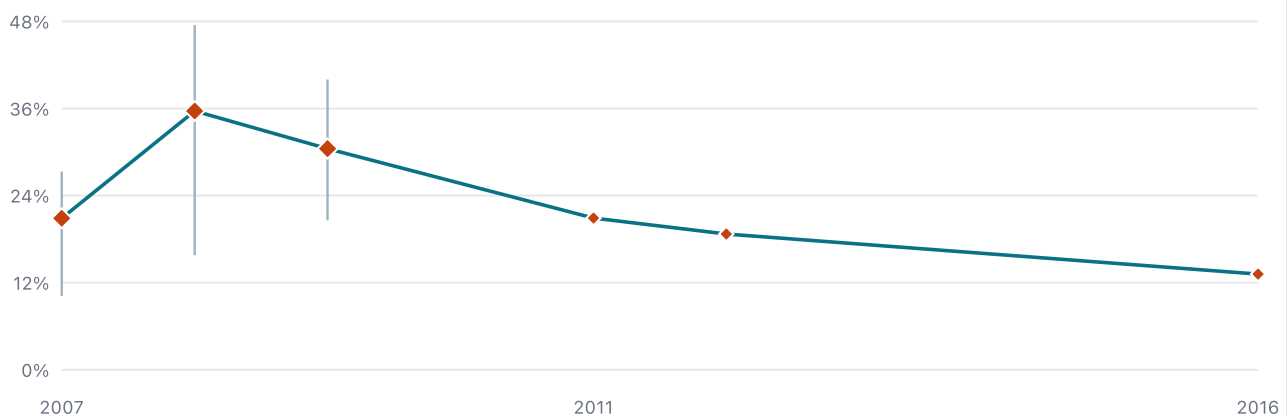


- [Maldives - Baa Atoll \(Hanifaru\)](#): Bleaching: scattered bone-white branch tips among the tagged colonies at site 10, 'the first hint of trouble' (January 2016).



Coral cover over time (pooled)

One point per year: the mean of every hard coral cover value available for this region that year — Anderson's own dives and every independent survey station within 5 km of them. The vertical bar is the full range behind that mean. Different programs use different methods at different stations, so this is a regional summary, not a single comparable series. Years resting on fewer than three values are drawn as smaller points (2011, 2012, 2016). Non-CRD points are from [Reef Check Foundation](#).



Sites in this region

- [Maldives - Anantara Kihavah house reef & Golden Wall](#) — 17% coral cover
- [Maldives - Baa Atoll \(Hanifaru\)](#) — 27% coral cover
- [Maldives - Four Seasons Landaa Giraavaru](#) — 37% coral cover
- [Maldives - Gaagandufaruhuraa](#) — 45% coral cover
- [Maldives - Kashidhoo Faru](#) — 26% coral cover
- [Maldives - Raa Atoll](#)

Nearby external survey stations

25 independent survey records within 5 km of a site in this region (deduplicated across sites).

► [Show all 25 records](#)

All images from [Coral Reef Diagnostics](#). Data are from Coral Reef Diagnostics and [Reef Check Foundation](#).



© Coral Reef Diagnostics.

References

- Souter D, et al. (eds) (2021) *Status of Coral Reefs of the World: 2020*. International Coral Reef Initiative / [Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network](#). [\[PDF\]](#)
- Spalding MD, et al. (2001) *World Atlas of Coral Reefs*. University of California Press, Berkeley. [\[PDF\]](#)
- Wilkinson C (2006) Status of coral reefs of the world: summary of threats and remedial action. In: Côté IM, Reynolds JD (eds) *Coral Reef Conservation*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. [\[PDF\]](#)